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S. Symington

M E E T T H E P R E S S
Produced by Lawrence E. Spivak

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SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 1963

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MODERATOR: Lawrence E. Spivak

GUEST: Senator Stuart Symington
Democrat of Missouri

PANEL: Marquis Childs, St. Louis Post Dispatch
Peter Lisagor, Chicago Daily News
Warren Rogers, Hearst Newspapers
Robert McCormick, NBC News

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MR. SPIVAK: This is Lawrence Spivak, inviting you to
MEET THE PRESS.

(Announcement)

MR. SPIVAK: Our guest on MEET THE PRESS is Senator
Stuart Symington, Democrat of Missouri. He is the only

Senator who is a member of the two Committees directly involved in the cold war: Foreign Relations and Armed Services. He is also a member of the Senate Space Committee. Senator Symington was the first Secretary of the Air Force. He was a candidate for the Presidential nomination in 1960.

We will start the questions with Mr. Marquis Childs.

MR. CHILDS: Senator, you now when Averill Harriman met with Khrushchev, shortly after the meeting Khrushchev issued a statement saying that he believed in an independent and neutral Laos, but he apparently gave no assurances at all that he would do anything to stop the Communist take-over of that country.

What I want to ask you is whether you don't feel the time has come for this country to take some pretty active steps to check that take-over, including perhaps sending troops, American troops into Laos?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Mr. Childs, based on my having been in that part of the world, I'd be very skeptical about any military action in Laos. I think it would be much better if we are going to have military action that we would consider what is necessary in South Viet Nam. As you know most of this trouble is coming from North Viet Nam, from Hanoi, specifically, and we've got a good many billion dollars now invested in the defense of those three little countries that formed part of Indo China.

My own feeling would be that we will have to face up sooner or later to what we want to do with respect to what is coming out of Hanoi.

MR. CHILDS: Well, we are already in South Viet Nam. There are more than 12,000 American troops there. Laos is at stake apparently and do you think the war can be successfully prosecuted in South Viet Nam if Laos goes entirely Communist?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, let me put it to you this way: I think we could be successful in South Viet Nam militarily regardless of what the Chinese Communists or the North Vietnamese did. I would have my doubts about what we could do in Laos if the Chinese Communists and the North Vietnamese were determined about Laos. It is a very difficult country to have any military action in. As you know, it has no seacoast, it has very few roads. I was surprised to hear only this week that Souvanna Phouma has been sympathetic to and agreed to have his half brother, Souphanouvong, let the Chinese Communists build roads down from North Viet Nam into Laos because that of course would help any aggression on the part of the North Vietnamese and the Chinese Communists.

MR. CHILDS: If I understand you properly, Senator, you are then in effect prepared to see that country go to the Communists?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I wouldn't be prepared to see it, but I think the place to stop it is in Hanoi and not in Laos and I think you would do it from Hanoi, or to Hanoi from South Viet Nam.

MR. CHILDS: How do you mean, what would we do about Hanoi, would we move in and take over Hanoi?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, I think that we ought to notify the North Vietnamese that we are tired of their infiltrating into South Viet Nam from Cambodia as well as from Laos, and that we are tired of their infiltrating into South Viet Nam itself. As you know they are doing that, even south of Saigon, and if they didn't cut it out we would destroy their marshalling yards in Hanoi.

I don't think we can continue to put billions and billions of dollars into this part of Southeast Asia and at the same time consistently be on the defensive politically as well as militarily. I don't think it will work out.

MR. CHILDS: What you are saying then is we would bomb Hanoi?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: We would either bomb it or we would go into Hanoi. I think that is the only way that you are ever going to satisfy the situation in what was formerly Indo China. Either that, or get out.

MR. CHILDS: Now this would mean a much larger number of American troops out there, would it not?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Oh, not necessarily, if you did 5
it from South Viet Nam, because you have 600 miles of
coastline with respect to South Viet Nam, so you would
utilize your naval forces in a way that would be totally
impossible in Laos.

MR. CHILDS: Senator, you have been talking about
what we should do in Laos and South Viet Nam. These are
roughly 8,000 to 9,000 miles away. What do you think about
Cuba which is 90 miles away? Are there moves we can make
there? Obviously we are not -- at least as far as anyone
knows, you may know by your position on the Committees --
making any very positive moves to remove that Communist
dictatorship from Havana.

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, of course Cuba is 90 miles
away and is therefore a much more serious matter. I
don't at this time see anything more than we are doing that
we could do. Everybody talks about Cuba. It is a little
bit like Mark Twain and the weather. Nobody seems to have
come up with anything practical by way of a suggestion as
to what to do. All of the prominent critics I know say
we should not invade, which I agree with.

On the other hand, I would hope we could do our best
to interest the Organization of American States, and that
we would be sympathetic to any Cuban movement with respect
to eliminating the Castro regime, because I am one who

does not think that as of today Cuba is a military menace in any serious form to this country, but I do think, Mr. Childs, that it is going to be used as a place to develop a great deal of subversion all though Central and South America.

As a matter of fact we know that it is going on now.

MR. SPIVAK: We will be back with MEET THE PRESS and more questions for our guest, Senator Stuart Symington, but first, this message.

(Announcement)

MR. SPIVAK: Now, resuming our interview, our guest today on MEET THE PRESS is Senator Stuart Symington. You have just met Marquis Childs of the St. Louis Post Dispatch. Our other reporters are Peter Lisagor of the Chicago Daily News, Warren Rogers of the Hearst Newspapers, and Robert McCormick of NBC News. Ned Brooks will be back with us next week.

We will continue the questions now with Mr. Lisagor.

MR. LISAGOR: Senator, to get back to Laos for just one moment, the suggestion has been made that perhaps we could agree to a partition of that country since the pro-Communist Pathet Lao holds the northern part of it now and the part the free world is interested in is the southern part, the Mekong River part, whereas you know the rightists have

about 60,000 troops and it would be too hard for the West to help them there.

What do you think about the proposition of partitioning it as Viet Nam is now partitioned?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I don't think it would last, Mr. Lisagor. I don't think that the people of Peiping or the people of North Viet Nam are interested in any agreements with respect to that country. We have noticed over the years that the totalitarians from the Kaiser in the First World War and Hitler in the Second are not interested in agreements if it bothers them in their desires for conquest and I believe that the Communists are determined to pick up Laos as soon as they can. When I was out there a year ago last fall, with General Maxwell Taylor and Secretary Walt Rostow, my feelings were just what they are today, and I think that it is fair to say that they would agree that I prophesied what would happen -- what has happened would happen at that time, which is about 16 months ago.

MR. LISAGOR: But a line has been drawn, Senator, in South Viet Nam and in Korea. Both are partitioned. You don't believe it will work at all in Laos because they want to take Laos? Is that your judgment?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: It is not working out in South Viet Nam and as you know the Communists are consistently

violating the line that has been drawn in Korea, and I think it would be much harder to defend any line that was drawn in Laos based on the terrain and the nature of the people and so forth than it would be in either South Viet Nam where again we are in a much better position from the standpoint of our own forces, or than it would be in Korea.

MR. LISAGOR: Senator, as we all know Fidel Castro is in Moscow now and they are giving him quite a reception. You would think he was a prodigal son returning home, and I wonder if you believe the reason the Soviets are going all-out for him is that they are trying to rub into our -- rub our noses into it because they have established a base in this hemisphere and he is the symbol of that base?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: That might be part of it. It looked last -- when ^{Mikoyan} was there that Castro was upset by the fact, they took out their offensive missiles, but I would say they are doing everything they could to solidify Cuba as a Communist base a few miles off the American coast and I think that is a wise remark you have made, and I believe they want to show the world that they are right behind Castro all the way.

MR. LISAGOR: Does this suggest to you, Senator, as the President and other Administration officials have indicated, that the Soviets plan to get any of their troops

out of there any time soon?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I think they have taken some out. As to whether they have taken their combat troops out or not, as you know is an open question, but I think they've still got a great many there and apparently they intend to keep them there unless we decide to do something about it, and then they have got another decision to make.

MR. ROGERS: Senator, I would like to question you about strategy, but first I would like to follow up your comments about bombing, attack or invading Hanoi. What do you suppose would be the reaction on the Red Chinese side if we did something like that?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: The Red Chinese might be upset about it. They might take planes off from Hainan, which is the island they control fairly close to the northern part of what was Indo China, but I must say I don't think they would want to tangle with the United States at this time in the air or any other way. They are already tangling on the ground, you might say, through the North Vietnamese. My only point in bringing that up is, that we put billions and billions of dollars into these three little countries, just like we put billions and billions of dollars into India and billions and billions of dollars into Pakistan, and I just don't think we can continue to put billions and billions of dollars all over the world, shoring up our defenses. I

think at some time that we have to show we are willing to take
a risk in order to avoid the type and character of
disintegration that is now going on in Laos.

MR. ROGERS: Then I take it you are not afraid of any escalation of a war in that area into a conventional world war type of thing or else nuclear --

SENATOR SYMINGTON: No, I wouldn't be afraid of that at all.

MR. ROGERS: You think we could do it and get away with it?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I certainly do and I am not at all apprehensive about how the Russians would feel about us doing it down there, against how they would feel for example if we did it around Berlin.

MR. ROGERS: Well Senator, on the question of strategy a couple of years ago when you and some others were complaining about a missile gap, and now the only thing we hear about a missile gap is that the Russians have one and they have it bad. Secretary McNamara says we could absorb two strikes and have enough to obliterate Soviet society.

Now what has happened to bring about this remarkable change?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: First, let me make this point with you: If we know, and knew, and still know really as little about what actually is in Cuba then I will leave it to you to decide how much we really know about what actually is in Russia. Now that is the first point. The next point is that the same man, a fine man, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency, between February, 1959 and August, 1961, reduced the estimate of the Central Intelligence Agency as to how many missiles were on

launching pads in Russia by 96.5 percent. His own figures in both cases.

Now I am not at all sure that he was right in February, 1959. I am not at all sure that he was right in August, 1961, and I am not at all sure based on my experience as a member of the Preparedness Subcommittee that is looking at the Cuban situation, that we know what is in Russia, today. The only thing that I am sure of, based on the many years that I have spent in this field, is that the one thing we know that the Soviet Communists, the Chinese Communists and, to the best of my knowledge, all other Communists respect is strength on the part of those who they would like to conquer.

MR. ROGERS: Are you confident now there is no missile gap, that we don't have any lag behind the Russians at this time?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I am not confident of that at all, no. And I don't think anybody can say with certainty what their position is as against ours.

For example as you know they've got some very fine airplanes flying. They probably have the finest supersonic bomber in the world flying today. And yet you have heard a lot of talk in the past about their leap-frogging the supersonic bomber to get into missiles. I have no confidence in any particular position because in a closed society it is very, very difficult to know what they have.

MR. ROGERS: Do you think our defense budget is in line with

our strategy? What I am thinking of is, are we spending too much on missiles and not enough on conventional warfare?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I think that is a very good question.

My criticism, if I have any, of the present operation is that we are putting too much attention or giving too much attention to computers. The greatest computer in the world is the mind of a man and it seems to me that the new people are constantly denegation the position of men and building up the position of machinery. If you have as much trouble about finding out what is or is not in Cuba, ninety miles away, then the fact that we are now moving towards a position where a man in Omaha, Nebraska will press a button and something takes off from Wyoming, goes across the Atlantic, goes across Europe, goes into Russia, behind the Urals and destroys a hardened base, from a parameter standpoint I think that is rather optimistic, frankly, and I wish we would put more attention into conventional weapons and more attention into positive control through the control of men as against instruments.

MR. ROGERS: Do you think 16 divisions is enough for the Army if it is to fulfill its conventional role?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, I think if we are going to have 16 divisions, it is wise to have 16 good divisions but I want to be honest with you, Mr. Rogers, I don't think the people in Moscow or Peking care too much whether we have 14 divisions or

16 divisions, or 18 divisions.

MR. MC CORMICK: Senator, I believe the full Armed Services Committee has recently studied the whole test ban question again. As Khrushchev, of course, as we all know, has offered two to three on-site inspections a year, and we have cut our demands down to seven a year, if it is not classified, is there any indication that we would accept fewer than seven a year?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well it was classified, but I think all that information should be given the American people and therefore it has been declassified. Dr. Brown, who is the head engineer and scientist in the Pentagon Building, has stated that he thinks six would be satisfactory. That is one less, and that has been declassified.

In addition to that as you probably know, not only have all the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the services, all the Chief of Staff of the services, but also all the service Secretaries have said before the Armed Services Committee in recent weeks that they felt that testing in the atmosphere was essential to the security of the United States.

MR. MC CORMICK: Is testing in the atmosphere essential to the development of an anti-missile missile?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, we haven't gotten into the testing field in the Armed Services Committee the way we are

going to, because the Senate Military Preparedness Subcommittee under the Chairmanship of Senator Stennis is about ready to undergo extensive hearings in this field. But the military people and the service Secretaries believe that it is essential to have atmospheric testing in order to develop adequate defense from the standpoint of anti-intercontinental ballistic ballistic missiles.

MR. MC CORMICK: That brings up another question then: Do you think Congress would go along with ratifying our current test ban offer, to say nothing of reducing the number of on-site inspections?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, Mr. McCormick, it is hard to say what the Congress would or wouldn't do. My personal opinion at this time is that it would not, because there are a good many very fine scientists who believe that the Russians are well ahead of us now in three important fields -- certainly two of three. They feel, -- as we know they are ahead of us in yield and therefore in all probability, in yield to weight. They have done some very sophisticated testing in the atmosphere in 1961 and 1962 to the point where these scientists believe that they are ahead of us in the anti-intercontinental ballistic missile field. And they may well be ahead of us in the penetration development as a result of the extensive work that we know that they have done on nose cones. They broke their word to us

after the 34-month moratorium by starting out a series of tests which they must have been preparing for many, many months before they actually did it, in the fall of 1961, and so the way things are going now it looks as if they are in pretty good shape from the standpoint of their nuclear position as against ours.

MR. SPIVAK: Senator, a moment ago in answer to Mr. Rogers you said something about computers. Do I understand you to mean by that that you think it is a mistake to phase out manned air power, as Mr. McNamara evidently is planning to do and that we ought not to put quite so much money into missiles, is that what you were saying, Senator?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Oh, yes, I do feel that way. I think that the degree of emphasis that we put on the Polaris weapon, which is a genocide weapon, and not a part of the theory of counter force, and building up the Minuteman which despite what people say, based on my analogy of going across to the Urals and hitting a hardened site, in my opinion is also a weapon of that character. In fact, we have no airplanes -- for the first time in our history we have no weapons systems in development at all that have to do with men, until you get to a program which ^{apparently} also may be in trouble, the Dyna Soar, and I don't think that is right. I think we ought to maintain a positive control of weaponry and not be

in a position of all or nothing. And actually I believe Mr. Rogers mentioned the budget. If you are going to a theory of overkill and abandoning the theory of counter force, than I think you could save a great deal of money in the budget as it is today.

MR. CHILDS: Senator, I would like to clarify two points. First about Laos. If I understood you correctly you said you predicted a year ago what has been happening now, is that correct?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: That is right.

MR. CHILDS: Therefore you must feel it was a great mistake for the Kennedy Administration to try to reach an accord on a neutral Laos?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: No, I never think it is a mistake to do your best to work out an arrangement where everybody signs some paper and then comes home and says "Peace in our time," but I have just never been one who believes, based on the activities of the Communists in places like Korea and based on this terrific misrepresentation that they gave President Kennedy with respect to offensive missiles in Cuba, that it was going to work. I am all for negotiation at any time, any place, on any subject, but I don't think that you are going to lick this problem by signing treaties with these people because it has been my experience, and based on history, that they never keep a treaty if they don't

think it is to their interests.

MR. LISAGOR: Governor Rockefeller of New York, and former Vice President Nixon and other critics of the Administration's policy toward Europe have suggested that we ought to help the Europeans directly to build their own nuclear force. Sell them the warheads and the know-how and the weapons that they need. What do you think of that argument?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Of course if you did that, Mr. Lisagor, you would have to chance the McMahan Act. You could not do it under the present law.

MR. LISAGOR: That was going to be my next question.

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Yes. Now actually we have helped the British. We have been in sort of a partnership with the British for a good many years in the nuclear field and I am somewhat disturbed and distressed at the volubility, you might say, of Mr. Harold Wilson's desire to give up any nuclear position. Because we have today as a head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman of Joint Chiefs, a very fine and able soldier and citizen, but he wrote a book in which he said there were two places we would certainly use nuclear weapons in case this country was attacked, or in case we were sure it was going to be attacked. And then he said there is a third possible case that we might use them and that would be an all-out attack against

Europe.

Now under those circumstances I think it is very clear why some people would want to develop their own nuclear force. As to whether we should help them, I would question that, although I think that proliferation especially with regard to other countries as well as France, is only a matter of time.

MR. LISAGOR: Well, what do you think about the Act, Senator, is it possible at all to amend that Act today in any way?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Yes, it would be possible if it was in the interests of the United States, but I think you would have to convince the Senate and the House that it would be in the interests of the United States to do it.

MR. SPIVAK: Gentlemen, we have only two minutes.

Mr. Rogers --

MR. ROGERS: Senator, before the editors recently Mr. McNamara said that the Pentagon was in chaos when he took over. When you were Secretary of the Air Force, was the Pentagon in chaos, then?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: Well, it was a chaotic condition spending \$13 billion, if it was in chaos, and now they are spending \$52 billion. I must say this: I wouldn't want to leave the wrong impression about Mr. McNamara and his work. I think we need civilian control very badly,

especially because of the cost of weaponry, and I am glad that he is there and I think he is doing a good job in making the decisions. I don't happen to agree with a couple of them, but that is the way our system works. We set the law in 1958 where he has direction authority and control and in my opinion he is at least as good a Secretary of Defense as we have ever had.

MR. MC CORMICK: Senator, in connection with the investigation of foreign lobbyists you have already caught one apparently, one John O'Donnell. What comes next in that investigation?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I think you would have to ask Chairman Fulbright about that. We have had a lot of hearings in executive session and some of it has been no more pleasant than the O'Donnell episode.

MR. SPIVAK: Senator, why do the Chiefs of Staff and the chiefs of service want a test in the atmosphere at this time? I thought we had given up all question even of testing in the atmosphere. Can you tell us?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: I think in the short period of time you say we have left, the best way to answer that is we believe in some fields the Russians are already ahead because they are testing in the atmosphere and we think we might lose our country if they get well ahead of us in this field.

MR. SPIVAK: Senator, can you tell us, is that the anti-missile missile field?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: That is one of the three I mentioned, yes.

MR. SPIVAK: Mr. Childs, a very short one.

MR. CHILDS: What about this crash program to the moon, \$20 to \$30 billion, do you think we should go forward with that?

SENATOR SYMINGTON: That is a difficult question to -- I think we might go forward a little more slowly, but I do feel again that those who control space in the years to come will control the world, just like those who control the air today control the world.

MR. SPIVAK: I am sorry to interrupt, gentlemen, but our time is up.

Thank you, Senator Symington, for being with us. I will tell you about next week's guest on MEET THE PRESS after this message.

(Announcement)

THE ANNOUNCER: For a printed copy of today's interview sent ten cents in coin and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Merkle Press, 809 Channing Street, N.E., Washington, D. C.

MR. SPIVAK: Next week our guest on MEET THE PRESS will be the President of the International Association of

Chiefs of Police, Chief Stanley A. Schrotel. Now this
is Lawrence Spivak saying goodbye for Senator Stuart
Symington and MEET THE PRESS.

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